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My Country, Right and Wrong

DENNIS ALAN WEEKS

Rhetoric 101 Exemption

IN MODERN TIMES, PATRIOTISM HAS OFTEN COME TO imply a virtual blindness to the faults of one's country. The rise of authoritarian ideologies has created an attitude known as "we-they" thinking; the inference is usually that "we" are good and "they" are bad.

However, countries are comprised of people, and people, be they American, Russian, or Ibo, can and do make mistakes with alarming regularity. In a world where life could be destroyed by a mistake in reading a radar screen or in pushing a button, we need to be increasingly aware of our own fallibility.

The current undeclared war between the United States and the Soviet Union is due primarily to this failure to recognize our capacity to err. I firmly believe that if both the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics could divorce themselves from the attitude that the other is the cause of all evil, many of the crises that bring us to the proverbial "brink of war" could be averted. This is not to say that the problem of Communism vs. Capitalism would be solved: the conflict of ideologies would be brought to the fore, however, and the people of the world could then deal with this overriding issue, rather than with the specific and often irrelevant issues which arise from day to day.

For example, the United States likes to consider itself a stronghold of democracy. We are also a traditionally capitalistic nation. In the press, over radio and television, and through all other means of communication, we have come to equate capitalism with democracy, and communism—because it is the antithesis of capitalism—with totalitarianism. Thus we support many dictators because their policy favors capitalism over communism. An overthrow of a capitalistic dictator by a non-capitalist democrat is generally interpreted in the United States as an affront to democracy. The issue is clouded, and we are unable to face the change rationally.

Another example is our dogmatic aversion to anything proposed by the Soviets in nuclear weapons control. In one case, American and British delegates at one of the ubiquitous conferences of the past five years agreed on a plan to be proposed by the Britons at the conference table. After Soviet hedging, the plan was shelved. Some months later, the U. S. S. R. presented the same plan, which was flatly rejected by the West. Had we been willing to consider the plan, even with a Russian label on it, perhaps we would not today still face the threat of nuclear war.

Finally, a striking example of the fallacy of our attitude was the U-2 incident. The U. S. would never spy, we said; only the Russians do that. Khrushchev was simply trying to intensify the Cold War. But then, through

a peculiar twist of fate, we admitted that we had sent Powers on a spy flight—but the Russians were evil for having shot him down.

These are only three examples. I have chosen cases of American fallibility because they are not generally as well publicized as Soviet mistakes. I feel that they help to underscore the fact that there is no absolute “right” or “wrong” in today’s world. We are dealing with shades of gray, not black and white.

A Touch of Life

WILLIAM BUSSEY

Rhetoric 101, Theme 3

I WAS WORKING THE FOUR TO MIDNIGHT SHIFT WHEN they brought him in. A bolt of lightning during a mid-afternoon thunderstorm had struck the signal mechanism of the traffic lights at a highway intersection so that all four lights were green. He and his wife had been returning from a vacation when his car had been hit broadside at the intersection.

I was passing ice water to the patients when the ambulance wailed up to the hospital. Abandoning that job, I rushed to my post at the entrance and helped unload him from the ambulance.

As I wheeled him down the hall to the emergency room I started the first phase of his examination. Where does he hurt? Can he move his fingers? How about his toes? Check for signs of shock or brain injury. In the emergency room I undressed him, noting the lacerations and abrasions as well as the extent of help he was able to give me. All of this would be rechecked more thoroughly by the doctor when he arrived, but he would want to know immediately if there was anything obviously critically wrong.

Throughout the whole examination my new patient kept moaning, “The hell with me, how’s my wife? I want to see my wife. I’m all right, where’s my wife?” The doctor came in and after ascertaining that there was no critical injury he ordered x-rays. Then the doctor turned and spoke to him, “Your wife died on the way to the hospital. I’m sorry.”

He looked blank for a moment and then seemed to deflate with a sigh. It wasn’t until I was wheeling him up to the x-ray room that he suddenly grasped my hand and cried softly, “Why, God, didn’t it happen to me? She was in her prime of life! Why didn’t it happen to me?”

Now, writing this, I experience a tremendous surge of emotion, but at that time I received it almost dully. He was still a patient to me, not a person.

I even chuckled to myself because I knew from the questions that the officers had asked of him that his wife was fifty-six, he was fifty-seven. "Prime of life!"

I tried to comfort him, to console him, but I was limited to the professional cliches; "Don't talk that, do you think your wife would want you to act that way? You've still got your life to live. You've got to go on." All the time I was worrying about what time I would get off duty. It was after one in the morning by the time all three victims had been examined, x-rayed, repaired and put to bed.

Our hospital is a very small affair. It was no trouble getting to know most of the men patients and a few of the women if they stayed for a week or so. I always tried to get to the hospital a half hour or so before I had to report for duty so that I could visit with the patients without having to get up and run in the middle of a conversation. On the day following the accident I was making the rounds of the patients and I stepped into his room.

He was sitting with his bed rolled all the way up. There were three young men with him. "Hi there, Billy boy!" he cried as soon as he saw me. "Come in and meet my boys." Then, "This is the boy who took care of me last night." I walked in, astonished to see him looking so well after his despondency the night before. His three sons had come to be with their father and I believe that was the sole reason that he was doing so well. From that time on, every time I walked by or went into his room, he had a cheery word ready.

It was because of this transformation that I grew to like and admire him. Every chance that I got, I would try to exchange a few words with him. On my day off I came to visit him and we had a pleasant conversation. He was anxious to get out of the hospital, but he didn't quite know what he would do when he did get out. He was finding it difficult to adjust to making plans without his wife.

His shoulder blade had been broken in the accident and six ribs had been smashed. For the shoulder he wore a truss type brace; for the ribs, a corset type belt. We were all amazed at his speedy recovery. He was scheduled to be discharged about a week after he had come in.

The day before the discharge date, I stopped in to see him before I reported for work. He and his sons were excited over the prospect of his getting out of the hospital. He was in excellent spirits, showing me how he could swing himself out of bed unassisted.

A few minutes later, during the daily report which was given to the staff members to acquaint them with the condition and treatment of each patient, his son rushed into the room. "Come quick, something's wrong!" The nurse and I ran towards his room. I grabbed the emergency oxygen, standard procedure for almost any kind of emergency. As soon as we got to the room I administered the oxygen while the nurse tried to find his pulse. It was no use. He was dead. The cause of death was later established as a heart attack. He had never had trouble with his heart before.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

PHILIP G. PLOTICA

Rhetoric 101, Theme 4

THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY" IS A DELIGHT-fully clever satire that ridicules one of the most common human idiosyncrasies, imagination. To illustrate the wonders of imagination, Thurber creates Walter Mitty, a timid, mouselike little man, who is forever being victimized by a nagging wife and an arrogant, "know it all" society. With the entire world against him, the only escape left for poor Walter Mitty is his imagination, which he uses to the utmost of his ability.

What makes "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" more than just another amusing short story is Thurber's unique and effective use of contrasts. Consider, for example, the first three paragraphs. Here the Walter Mitty of imagination is placed side by side with the Walter Mitty of reality. The contrast between the iron-hearted Naval Commander, bravely giving orders to his men, and the chicken-hearted Walter Mitty, timidly taking orders from his wife, is quite apparent. But the use of contrasts is by no means restricted to the beginning of the story. On the contrary, it is employed all the way through to the very last word. Compare the quick-thinking Doctor Mitty, famous surgeon, to the Walter Mitty who cannot park his car, remove his tire chains, nor readily remember to buy a box of puppy biscuits. Compare also the "greatest shot in the world" or the daring Captain Mitty, or the "erect and motionless, proud and disdainful, Walter Mitty the Undefeated" with the Walter Mitty who seeks the quiet refuge of a big leather chair in a hotel lobby. Contrasts are effective tools for any writer, but the straightforward manner in which Thurber employs them enhances their effectiveness considerably.

After briefly skimming through the collection of contrasts that makes up "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," one might feel that there is little connection between the paragraphs describing the imagined Walter Mitty and the Mitty of reality. However, closer observation reveals that Thurber does, by the use of suggestive words and phrases, cleverly establish links between the Mitty of fact and the Mitty of fancy. Examine the following lines taken from the end of paragraph one and the beginning of paragraph two of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty":

"... The Old Man'll get us through," they said to one another. "The Old Man ain't afraid of Hell!" ...

"Not so fast! You're driving too fast!" said Mrs. Mitty. "What are you driving so fast for?"

We shudder to think that there might be a connection between Hell and life with Mrs. Mitty, but, unfortunately, such could be the case. Consider

how Mrs. Mitty's mention of Doctor Renshaw and the event of driving by a hospital lead to a daydream in which Walter Mitty, a distinguished surgeon, assists Doctor Renshaw in a difficult operation. Take note also of how a newsboy's shout about the Waterbury trial initiates the trial of Walter Mitty in the following paragraph. Such skillful employment of transitions, by which an event in reality triggers an event in the imagination, is sound not only from the literary standpoint, but also from the psychological point of view.

"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" affects the reader in a variety of ways. The purposeful use of excessively dramatic, imaginative heroes, the repetition of the sound "pocketa-pocketa," the use of meaningless pseudo-medical terms such as "obstreosis of the ductal tract"—all these make us want to laugh. The plight of Walter Mitty, at the mercy of his domineering wife, arouses our sympathy. However, we neither laugh at nor sympathize with Walter Mitty. Thurber has created Mitty not as an individual, but as a representative of human beings in general. He has made us realize how similar our imaginative worlds are to those of his character. We cannot laugh at Mitty without laughing at ourselves. We cannot sympathize with him without feeling sorry for ourselves. The strength and heart of the satire lie in the reader's perception of the similarity of his own daydreams and those of Mitty.

Street Conditions in Champaign-Urbana

MARY LOUISE BORGMAN

Rhetoric 102, Theme 3

AMONG ALL THE CITIES I HAVE VISITED OR LIVED IN, I can say unequivocally that I have never seen public streets in such a deplorable condition as are those in Champaign-Urbana. The fact that the streets are allowed to remain in such a state is inexcusable, for not only do they constitute an eyesore and a nuisance in an otherwise attractive city, but I am sure they cause a constant, wasteful drain of tax money.

To prove my point that the streets are in bad condition, one has only to travel a short distance in any direction. An especially good proving ground would be the heavily-traveled thoroughfares of Mattis and Kirby. As one travels along either of the two, he cannot help noticing the large chuck-holes in the pavement, the washboard or undulate effect in certain areas, the indeterminate curb-lines, and the quantity of loose gravel. On the west side of the intersection of these two streets, Kirby actually becomes a dirt road, not unlike those found deep in the country, except that it is a little wider. In

addition to the defects already noted, the trip is further made arduous by the repairs and re-routings which seem to be always in progress on these streets and on so many others.

But, one may say, if repairs are being made, then surely the bad street situation will be alleviated. This is not the case, however. Repairs are made in an ineffective manner and with unsatisfactory materials. A common practice is the resurfacing of the streets with "chips and oil." This process consists of spreading black oil over the road and then covering it with small, sharp-edged chips of stone. The oil in no way binds the chips to the surface, and after a few days, the constant traffic has pushed most of the chips to the side of the road and into the gutter. It remains only for a rain to dislodge the remaining stones, thereby completely nullifying any good effect that the resurfacing might have had. Another useless method of street repairing carried on in Champaign-Urbana is the filling of chuck-holes with soft asphalt. The weight of most cars is sufficient to press the asphalt down in the center and out of the hole at either end, creating two lumps where there had been one chuck-hole. This can hardly be called an improvement.

Despite the fact that resurfacing with chips and oil and filling holes with asphalt are ineffective as improvements, they do cost money. And because such improvements are so short-lived, they must be made quite frequently. It would appear that the constant expense keeps the street department's funds so depleted that it is never able to finance a thorough job of street-rebuilding. This vicious circle results in a great outlay of tax money with very little benefit to anyone, except perhaps the manufacturers of chips, oil, and asphalt.

To realize that the streets are an eyesore, one has only to envisage Kirby and Mattis as I have previously described them. The pleasing effect of a lovely home and a well-kept lawn can be very nearly destroyed when such a home and lawn are bordered by a sticky, oily roadway filled with ruts and holes. The nuisance lies in having to dodge chuck holes or slow down to a snail's pace in order to avoid damage to one's car, and in constantly having to go around barricades caused by the useless repairs. The oil used in resurfacing creates an added nuisance by adhering to the finish of one's car with a tenacity it never shows in adhering to the road.

Now it is perfectly true that the upkeep of public streets is a problem in almost every city, but it is a problem which must be dealt with in an effective and sensible manner, and it is not being dealt with that way in Champaign-Urbana. Rather, it seems to be a problem which is largely ignored, not only by the city councils, the mayors, and the street departments, but by the citizens as well. To me, such an apathetic attitude on so important a subject is inexcusable. If the situation is caused by a lack of funds, then perhaps the city government should consider a raise in taxes or a bond issue. I am sure that the people of Champaign-Urbana would be willing to pay a small premium on the upkeep of their streets if they were assured that their money would be spent on quality materials and a thorough job of street-renewal.

The College Slang Vocabulary

LINDA CREAMER

Rhetoric 101, Theme 10

MANY COLLEGE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY SEEMS ALmost entirely limited to several slang expressions. Instead of using their brains to select the most appropriate word or phrase, they re-use these few general slang phrases.

"Bad news," the most popular of these, could be defined as any place, situation, person, or thing that is undesirable. A fraternity on probation is "bad news." When a boy stands up a girl, this is a "bad news" situation. A grouchy bus driver is "bad news." A difficult course is "bad news." In short, "bad news" is used to convey a negative feeling about almost anything.

"Wow! She's a gas!" "Gas" is a very general term which is used to describe a person. The person who uses this word is showing his approval of someone. Thus, it is a noun showing a personal opinion. In one student's mind, a sarcastic instructor is a "gas." In another student's mind, an enthusiastic, idealistic instructor is a "gas." To one boy, a shy, sweet girl is a "gas." To another boy, a loud, flirtatious girl is a "gas." A strong, silent man may be a "gas" to one girl, but a thin, laughing man is a "gas" to another girl.

"Oh, he's completely out of it." "Out of it" is a phrase used by typical college students to describe a person who refuses to conform to their standards. A non-drinker is "out of it." An art major who grows a beard is "out of it." A book worm is "out of it." A non-dater is "out of it."

"Barf," which is actually a noun meaning monkey vomit, is a word students use to show disgust or anger.

"Barf!" exclaims Jane as she looks at the clock and realizes she has five minutes in which to walk ten blocks.

"Barf!" mutters Dick as he fumbles with the stubborn lock on his physical education locker.

"Barf!" moans Nancy as she looks at her cracked glasses.

Typical college students seem to like "barf" because it isn't obscene or sacrilegious, yet it is more potent than the ineffective "shoot" or "dang."

"Blast," which used to be a noun describing a big beer party, is now used to describe a situation that is hilarious fun or, using another slang term, a situation in which anyone would have a "ball." A pledge walk-out is a "blast" (for the pledges). A dance where a jazzy, rhythmic combo is playing is a "blast." A successful joke played on actives is a "blast."

These slang expressions are so general that they destroy one purpose of words, which is "to describe something in a vivid, exact way." Instead of using many words to describe one situation, these "typical college Joes" use a few words to describe a multitude of situations.

The Language of Advertisement:

The Sexual Approach

DONALD L. FOX

Rhetoric 101, Theme 10

IT IS TRUE THAT MOST ADVERTISING IS BASED UPON THE implantation of fear in the prospective customer, but this is a negative approach that can cut like a two-edged sword—the fear may be so unpleasant that the reader rejects the product, either consciously or unconsciously simply by forgetting it. Some sort of positive appeal is needed, some type of emotional titillation that he can connect with the product in a pleasurable fashion. Sex is sometimes used to fulfill this need.

The difficulties that beset the advertiser when he tries to utilize this approach stem ironically from the very thing that gives it its punch—there are *two* sexes. Before an effective advertising appeal can be made, the copywriter must analyze a product as to whether it appeals essentially to men, to women, or to both. After that, it becomes a matter of thesaurus-thumbing, as the following examples of advertising's pink and purple prose will show.

In selling man-goods, the copywriter demonstrates his comprehension of the modern American male's anxiety about his maleness, increasingly threatened by females drunk with emancipation. Thus, an ad for men's cardigans stresses their "rugged good looks," and their suitability for "the outdoor man," while deodorants disclaim any "sissy smell," in favor of a "he-man aroma." (The noun shift is interesting here, with all the unpleasant connotations of a "smell" being replaced by the richly pleasurable ones of "aroma," revealing the adman's knowledge that men too have a fastidious side.)

With women, advertisers generally don't waste the sexual approach on utilitarian things ("He'll *love* you for making him his favorite cake with your new Splurgo DeLuxe Mixer"), but save it for the really feminine items. An ad for Kayser lingerie gloats over an "interlude gown," "It's almost wicked . . . you feel so beautiful." And it is in his dealings with perfumes that the copywriter achieves the most sensual prose of our century. "Provocative" has almost become a cliché, without indicating to what our lady customer is being provoked. An ad for "Wind Song," a Prince Matchabelli distillation, tells us that as this substance "warms against your skin," it becomes "the subtlest form of communication between woman and man," and it continues with such evocative nouns as "rhythm," "pulse beat," and "aftermath." Only

some small remaining scrap of decorum has guided the choice of "fulfillment" instead of "climax."

In their attempts to persuade both men and women to buy a basically one-sex item, advertisers rely largely upon gift-suggestions. Sex is usually guaranteed as a reward for the gift. A Christmas ad for ladies' watches (Bulova) declares that "only a few women in your city will be lucky and loved enough to get one of these . . . watches"; there is an accompanying illustration of a lucky woman who is being loved. Another Christmas ad coyly suggests, "It's so nice to have a man around the house . . . give him Stanley tools . . . *and see!*"

When the appeal of the product is not limited to one sex, the copywriter's difficulties are somewhat lessened. A magazine ad urging us to try a "dram of Drambuie" Scotch liqueur after dinner says that "it's a promise fulfilled. . . .", The sexual connotation of that ubiquitous word "fulfilled" is heightened by the illustration of a woman semi-reclining on a couch with a man who holds a shot of this specific hooch. A recently introduced electric clock (Sessions) has a small extension alarm—pink and heart-shaped—to be placed under the pillow for the selective awakening of just one sleeper. It has not been christened the "Unilarm" or anything so mundane, but the "Love-Alarm." "And," continues the copy, "solitary sleepers *also* appreciate the deft and dulcet way of the LOVE-ALARM . . . the next best thing to a warm, 'Good morning, (sigh) darling!'" [sic]

A final example of the bi-sexual appeal will also illustrate the desperation that can overtake a tired copywriter who must descend to punning on a less-than-subtle level. Illustration: an Indian warrior sleeping in a hammock made of a sheet, while a squaw smilingly departs the scene. Caption: "A buck well spent on a Spring Maid sheet."

And just where is the adman headed in this whole area of sexual salesmanship? It seems quite obvious—into the subtle, smoky depths of the human subconscious, where words mingle with symbols to produce a stirring of the libido. One case in point will probably be all we can stomach.

A recently introduced Studebaker automobile was given the name of "Lark." Some of the accompanying ad material makes cutely innocuous puns about having a lark with this machine, but the image the Lark copywriter wants to seed our ids with is the soaring symbol that appears with the frequency of a punctuation mark in all the ads—a bird in flight. According to orthodox psychologists, this is almost universally accepted by the subconscious mind as a symbol of sexual gratification and fulfillment. To make sure we don't miss the point, the phrase, "*Love that Lark,*" is used (*italics never mine*). In view of the recent and widely-quoted studies into the sexual meanings of a car to its owner, this is extremely significant.

Further motivational research and increasing familiarity of Madison Avenue with Freudian concepts are certain to bring about elaborate extensions of this trend. From the above beginnings to a practical application of the Rorschach cards is just a matter of time.

Communion

ROBERT RUTTER

Rhetoric 101, Theme 5

THE ROOM IS DARK. IT IS NOT A BLACK DARK, BUT A hazy-blue darkness. There is an occasional glow from a lighted cigarette; it cuts through the haze for an instant but is quickly subdued. Its attention riveted on the brightly illuminated stage, the audience is hushed. The rattle of ice in a glass is the only sound in the room. The atmosphere is suggestive of an expected thrill, a great moment in one's life. A man swings his arm rhythmically three times. It is the blues.

The deep, resounding tones of the trombone lead into the first chorus. The intricately beautiful patterns of the improvised ensemble emerge, grasping the audience in an unyielding grip. An almost audible sigh of relief mixed with familiar pleasure escapes into the room, seemingly lifting the darkness momentarily. The idea has been stated and understood.

Now the theme is unfolding and the narrators are jointly relating the plot. The basic melody is carried through the standard whole chords and minor changes by the rich, full tone of the trumpet. Variations above the major strain are heard from the clarinet—haunting, compelling the attention. Underscoring the efforts of these two, the trombone emphatically complements the group while adding original statements of its own beneath the melody line. The audience is living the music now, pleased by familiar phrases, pleasantly surprised by new ones. It is a time for the individual interpretations.

The Negro clarinetist steps forward as the first chorus ends. He leads into his solo with a series of low, melodic notes that capture the audience. The low strains continue for four bars; then he suddenly soars into the upper range, with the listeners following. He is pouring his heritage into the minds and souls of his hearers, telling them what it means to be a Negro, how he and his ancestors have lived. He is saying to them now what he could never express in words, and they can understand. As he reaches the end of his solo, he slowly steps back.

Cutting through the last tones of the clarinet, come the low, growling tones of the trombone. The trombone player is not a Negro, but he has his blues to tell—cheap rooms, cheap jobs, cheap loves. This is not an expression of sorrow, not a bid for sympathy, but rather the simple telling of a life. A climb to an exquisite finish leaves the hearers suspended, still held by the eloquence of his tale. The spell is broken suddenly with the advent of a new sound, the trumpet.

The clear, almost biting tone slices through the room. Here is a young man, one who has neither the heritage nor the experiences of his predecessors. He has youth, however, and a slight knowledge of that which lies ahead. He is reflecting his contemplation of the future, his hopes and fears. The audience knows his story and is receptive to his plea. He winds out his break with a lead-in to the last chorus.

Suddenly there is a swing up-tempo. The listeners, shocked by this, respond by beating time. The earlier passages are forgotten in the rush of music from the stand. There is an abrupt reversal, and the last four bars are back at the original tempo, a sort of reiteration of all that has been said. At this point the audience finally catches the subtle but basic strain of optimism that runs beneath the main theme. The story is over. The relationship is complete.

On Huck Finn's Loneliness

RON LINDGREN

Rhetoric 102, Theme 11

OF ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS WHICH MAKE UP THE singular personality of Huck Finn, his loneliness provides the clearest insight into his moral quality. This loneliness is with him always. That he has, to some measure, accustomed himself to its constant presence can be seen in the method by which Huck contrives to combat the loneliness which he feels on Jackson's island after his "death": "By and by it got sort of lonesome, so I went and set on the bank and listened to the current swashing along, and counted the stars and drift-logs and rafts that came down, and then went to bed; there ain't no better way to put in time when you are lonesome; you can't stay so, you soon get over it."¹ Huck cannot, however, always have control and carefully regulate his loneliness. Late one night, after a larger than usual dosage of "sivilization" from Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas there is such an awful void of loneliness within him that says, "I got so lonesome I most wished I was dead."² What is the essence of the loneliness which drives Huck to wish for death to release him from it?

Huck is, of course, lonely in the sense of being alone. Respectable society shuns him as an outcast. He has no friends in the true sense of the word; Huck rejects Tom Sawyer and his gang for the bourgeois romanticism which Leo Marx calls "the pseudo-religious ritual in which all nice boys

¹ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Lionel Trilling (New York, (957), p. 37.

² Twain, p. 3.

must partake.”³ Huck has only drunken Pap, an outcast himself, whose only interest in Huck is the money his son comes into.

The loneliness of Huck as an outcast is, however, only a superficial and minor facet of the greater and deeper loneliness within him. Huck's real loneliness is in his sense of being alien to society. This is not merely because society shuns him; it is a feeling that he does not belong in society. The manifestation of this alienation is in his feeling uncomfortable in society. Huck's introduction into respectable society has been at the Widow's, where, as Richard Adams has observed, “gentility is manifested painfully to him in regular hours, formal meals, and stiff clothing.”⁴ Miss Watson, the Widow's sister, constantly pesters Huck with “Don't put your feet up there Huckleberry,” “Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry—set up straight,” “Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?”⁵ The Widow Douglas, though she freely takes snuff, refuses to allow Huck the pleasure of his pipe.

Thus is it that to Huck respectable society seems bent upon making him miserable. He looks back upon the free, easy, and comfortable life that was his before his introduction into society, and he realizes that the loss of that freedom is too much of a price to pay for the status with which the gentility attempts to endow him. Lionel Trilling writes of Huck: “He knows what status is and on the whole he respects it—he is really a very respectable person and inclines to like ‘quality folks’—but he himself is unaffected by it. He himself has never had status, he has always been the lowest of the low, and the considerable fortune he had acquired in the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is never real to him.”⁶ Thus Huck feels no kinship with society because his values are not the twin values of the gentility, status and wealth. Furthermore, as James Cox states, Huck has some “inner awareness that membership in the cult will involve the dissolution of his character and the denial of his values.”⁷ In other words, Huck has a premonition that society's set of values is shallow and false.

Huck's feeling of not belonging in society is further strengthened by the aristocracy which he comes into contact with during the river voyage with Jim, the escaped slave. Whereas the “one-horse” respectability of St. Petersburg's middle class had been but a source of discomfort to Huck, the senseless vendettas of the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons and the stupid pride of Colonel Sherburn which drove him to kill the harmless Boggs were an

³ Leo Marx, “Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and Huckleberry Finn,” *American Scholar*, XXII (Autumn, 1953), 434.

⁴ Richard P. Adams, “The Unity and Coherence of *Huckleberry Finn*,” *Tulane Studies in English*, VI (1956), 91.

⁵ Twain, p. 2.

⁶ Lionel Trilling, ed., *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain (New York, 1948), pp. x-xi.

⁷ James M. Cox, “Remarks on the Sad Initiation of Huckleberry Finn,” *Sewanee Review*, LXII (Summer, 1954), 394.

abhorrence to him. Furthermore, the fine manners of the gentility, which Huck had been so attracted to, became pretentious sham to him when he saw these same manners burlesqued by the King and the Duke. Richard Adams, in writing about Huck's encounters with the aristocracy of the valley society, states that "The incidents are not haphazardly chosen or arranged. Each has its revealing gleam to contribute to Huck's unconsciously dawning awareness of the true values of the civilization to which he is asked to belong."⁸ And it is in what Adams chooses to call "the injustice, the hypocrisy, and the general moral ugliness and weakness of Southern society before the war"⁹ that Huck is lonely, for his morals will not allow him to become a part of that culture. Unconsciously, he feels that doing so would be to lower and degrade himself.

But while society is repellent to Huck, he is also attracted to it by an innate pity and tenderness for mankind. Though used and exploited in every way by the Duke and the King, Huck is still prompted to warn them of their danger from the mob. This same pity for his fellow man is the reason that after trapping the robbers on board the *Walter Scott* his first thought is to send someone to rescue them. Huck's ambivalent attitude toward society is summed up by Trilling as "a tenderness which goes along with the assumption that his fellow man is likely to be dangerous and wicked."¹⁰ Marx is of the opinion that the sign of maturity in Huck is in "the mature blending of the two, suspicion of human motives and a capacity for pity."¹¹ Thus Huck, although he cannot accept the conventions of society, cannot live outside of society because of his ingrained compassion for people. The loneliness of indecision weighs heavily upon Huck as the values of society, reinforced by Huck's genuine liking of people, wrestle with the values of the individual for the spirit of Huck Finn. He is like a tiny iron filing held between two equally powerful and opposing magnets.

This inner battle in Huck breaks to the surface when Huck is forced to choose between the two worlds. The occasion is the appearance of Jim, the runaway slave, whom Huck joins in flight on the raft. From the moment Huck has skipped out of the woods on Jackson's Island to confront an astonished Jim, who thought him dead, the word lonely disappears from its common place in Huck's vocabulary. He feels no loneliness with Jim on the raft because in Jim he has found a person with similar feelings, a person to whom he does not feel alien. They share a boundless compassion for people. With Jim, Huck is able to create a society which he can accept, one which follows their law of the raft: "What you want, above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied, and feel right and kind towards the

⁸ Adams, p. 92.

⁹ Adams, p. 103.

¹⁰ Trilling, p. x.

¹¹ Marx, p. 429.

others.”¹² This, Marx contends, is the credo which “constitutes the paramount affirmation of the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and it obliquely aims a devastating criticism at the existing social order.”¹³ And these two, in living this creed, comprise, in Trilling’s words, “a community of saints.”¹⁴

Huck’s whole sense of right and wrong, guilt and anxiety had been a product of civilization. Intimacy with Jim, which makes possible a moral growth in Huck, wrought its own sense of right and wrong from their relationship. But a gnawing doubt grows in Huck as the society within him asserts itself and lets it be known that helping a fugitive slave to freedom is “wrong.” It is then that Huck’s conscience, “the ally of social pressure for conformity,”¹⁵ is brought into conflict with the new feelings produced by his relationship with Jim. Huck faces his greatest loneliness when, without counsel or help, and very much alone, he must choose the victor in the elemental struggle of the values of the two worlds.

His conscience, the conscience of any Southern boy in the pre-war era, tells him that helping Jim to freedom is wrong, and when he writes the note to Miss Watson, Huck feels that his obligations to society are fulfilled and his cares drop away.¹⁶ This was enough for the Huck Finn of St. Petersburg, but the matured Huck has new doubts and anxieties which are stronger than those produced by society. Thus it is that after long wrestling with the problem on three distinct occasions Huck makes his monumental decision to reject society by helping Jim.

This victory is, indeed, a victory over the prevailing morality. But as the readers of *Huckleberry Finn* bask in the glow of the victory of Huck’s individual and distinctive humanity over society and himself, they forget that this victory entails the acceptance by Huck that loneliness is his lot. Huck has rejected society, that very society which he is attracted to by his compassion and tenderness for people. Huck Finn would rather be lonely than to reject the human feelings which are so much stronger than the commercial morality of society which they are in opposition to.

It is this fact which gives the character of Huck Finn such heroic proportions. And it is with this fact in mind that one will readily agree with the observation of Lionel Trilling: “No one who reads thoughtfully the dialect of Huck’s great moral crisis will ever again be wholly able to accept without some question and some irony the assumptions of the respectable morality by which he lives, nor will ever again be certain that what he considers the clear dictates of moral reason are not merely the engrained customary beliefs of his time and place.”¹⁷

¹² Twain, p. 125.

¹³ Marx, p. 431.

¹⁴ Trilling, p. ix.

¹⁵ Adams, p. 93.

¹⁶ Trilling, p. xii.

¹⁷ Trilling, p. xiii.

A Proposal to Eliminate Automobile Accidents

THOMAS OSBORN

Rhetoric 102, Theme 11

ONE OF THE GREATEST KILLERS IN AMERICA IS THE automobile; it takes thousands of lives annually. There have been many attempts to reduce the death toll, but all of these have failed. In order to solve this problem we must adopt a new attack that follows the best American traditions of progress. We must use the same foresight as those who advocated the income tax and prohibition.

Since Americans have refused to follow the pleas of the National Safety Council to drive carefully, we must develop a concrete plan to bring about compliance. After many hours of profound concentration, I have come to the conclusion that the National Safety Council is approaching the problem incorrectly. Instead of exhorting the public to drive slowly and carefully, we should outlaw automobiles entirely. This solution offers additional advantages. It will create good will abroad. Since many countries are jealous of the United States for its great material wealth and since we display our wealth most prominently in our automobiles, the abolition of automobiles will improve our relations with other countries. In addition, there will no longer be the great social stigma that is presently attached to families that do not own a car, or that own only one or two.

Those who would detract from my scheme will probably say that this great change would cause economic chaos. All workers in the automobile industry would be made jobless. Unemployment would swell to unprecedented proportions. I have studied this problem carefully, however, and plan to solve it in two ways. First, we will continue to build some automobiles and send them to our opponents in the cold war. Doing this will not only kill off some of our opponents in car accidents, but will also make Russia and her allies despised by the countries that previously hated us. Second, we will adapt a majority of car manufacturing facilities to the making of bicycles. The need for expanded production of these vehicles is obvious.

Surely no person who is thinking only of the good of our great country can refuse to applaud and accept this plan. It would not only stop the needless slaughter on our highways, but it would also create national and international good will.

The Day of Three Dawns

ELIZABETH CONSTANCE KROHNE

Rhetoric 101, Theme 3

WE NEVER KNOW WHAT TURNING POINT IN OUR LIVES awaits us as we wake on the most ordinary of mornings. The odds are that a particular day will follow the customary routine; but all of us observe that purely contingent events occasionally bring us new insights or challenges that are totally unexpected and strangely significant. Knowing this puts an element of excitement in common patterns of life. I was vaguely aware of this as I woke one morning in my room at Colorado College two summers ago and dressed in hiking clothes to go alone to the Garden of the Gods.

It was a very early hour, about three A.M., when I hired a cab to take me to the garden to photograph the sunrise. I recall that I was looking for beauty and solitude, but hardly anything more. I arrived ten minutes ahead of the sun. The rocks are rouge by ordinary daylight, but when the first slant of sun strikes them they blaze orange. Against a sky that is sapphire by contrast they pose stunning forms. I spent several thrilling hours in the deserted garden, almost too rapt to click the shutter. Gradually the sun became high and hot and the rocks quieted into their usual blush. Sunday tourists filled the park. I decided to find my way back. The beauty of the place had only served to increase my restlessness.

To account for the impact of the experience that followed I must explain my state of mind at that time. Gradually, starting about two years before that day, I had found myself drifting away from my early religious ideas and training—those of a little Protestant church in my home town. Although the desire for religious enlightenment is a core of my personality, I had allowed this drive to become completely dormant to the extent that spiritual values were almost entirely submerged by esthetic and intellectual ones. I was rather belligerent in my denials. Perhaps this attitude had fostered the unquiet feelings that followed me out of the garden to the road where I hitched a ride back to Colorado Springs.

My ride was in an ancient Hudson with two ancient people and a tiny dog. The man, who had the incredible name of Smith, announced that he planned to visit his brother in a small city midway to my destination, after which he promised he would take me on to the college. Meanwhile, he said, I was welcome to stop at his brother's with him.

The house we stopped at was in complete contrast to the scene I had photographed. Small and uncared for, it stood on a street of very poor,

run-down homes. Sunlight did not brighten the aspect, but made the dwellings seem darker and more withdrawn. Mr. Smith told me that his brother had lived in that house, indeed, in one room of it, for thirty years, almost totally paralyzed by rheumatic arthritis. I was prepared, then, to see a human wreck wearing an expression of despair.

The room where the invalid lay was cluttered with old books and newspapers. The walls, painted long before in a sour cream colour, were oppressive; a few calendars and magazine cutouts which ornamented them did not relieve the impression. One picture caught my eye immediately, a print of the modern religious painting, the *Smiling Christ*. I took my place self-consciously on a chipped-enamel chair and turned my attention to the man who spoke from the bed.

His voice was distant but not weak. He was entirely twisted into helplessness, his spine S-shaped, his hands nearly useless. I could not help being overwhelmed by pity. Most of all, though, I was struck by his expression. It was, in contrast to all the symptoms of age and pain that marked him otherwise, youthful and rapt. It was puzzling to me that he could look that way in spite of his long confinement.

We talked for two hours. At first I described myself and my experiences to him, having replaced the notion that such a description might be painful to him with the realization that he had long since accepted his position and enjoyed such experiences vicariously. Little by little he talked also, and his personality was revealed to some extent. I began to see in him a conviction that his life would not end when his affliction killed him. He evidently believed that a real Heaven awaited him where there would be streets to walk on and legs to walk with. I saw the situation into which I had brought my intellectual conceit and my earnest but aggressive denial of revealed religion. I felt a sensation that was almost pain, and an acute unhappiness. Although his hope was an obvious thing, I had in my heart no hope for him.

I cannot say that this encounter changed my own convictions or in any measure converted me. It did force on me a necessity of inquiring again into spiritual worlds, and made me doubt the adequacy of skepticism as a fundamental attitude toward life. With this doubt I became more humble. After a long sleep my mind reached out again.

I returned that evening to the Garden of the Gods: I saw the moon rise there. The sight of the garden by night was more beautiful than the morning scene was. Moonlight served not to reveal the scene, but rather to reveal the darkness in it. Paradoxically, the questions that flooded over me were a comfort to me.

MODEL SENTENCES

The following student sentences are based on the models in Exercise 18 (p. 204) in the *University Handbook*.

#1. To flunk out of college in the senior year, the most important period in one's life, to flunk out when future plans and hopes are becoming a reality, is not the most welcome of events.

Donald Johnson

#2. I can distinctly remember my grandfather telling me that there are at least two times in every man's life when he is a conformist: when he is born and when he dies.

Bradley Fox

#2. I forget where it is stated that the love of money is the root of all evil, but it is a vice that I avoid: I spend money almost as quickly as I earn it.

Donald Steiner

#2. I forget who it was that recommended that, for their own good, children ought never be struck by an adult; but it is a precept I have followed scrupulously: I am a confirmed bachelor.

Harry Carl

#3. Considering yourself indispensable to mankind is like pulling your finger out of water and observing the hole it left.

Donald Steiner

#4. When in lecture rooms, classes and thoughtful conversations, I hear about the Needs of the Student, his Complex Problems, his Difficulties, Doubts, and Spiritual Weaknesses, I feel an impulse to go out and comfort him, to solve his problems, and speak encouraging words of praise to him.

Jose Wallach

#4. But when from radios, TV, newspapers and bored adolescents, I learn about the Neglect of Teenagers, their Social Problems, their Lack of Love, Understanding, and Recreational Facilities, I sense a desire to venture forth and advise that Persecuted Generation to make their own life, and not expect it to be given to them on a Silver Platter.

Donald Steiner

#5. Examinations are properly the search for truth: an investigation for pearls of knowledge, not a punishment for the striving student.

Jane Trampe

#5. Mathematics is properly the key to the universe: a method of unlocking the secrets of science, not the treasure beyond the door.

Donald Steiner

#7. When I hear people say they have not found a science so agreeable or interesting as to be in love with it, or that they look with pleasure at not having to study it, I am apt to think they have never been properly alive, nor seen with clear vision the world they think so meanly of, or anything in it—not even the clothes they wear.

Harry Carl

#7. When I hear people say that learning is unrewarding and unnecessary, and that they look with pleasure towards the termination of their education, I am apt to think they have never been blessed with the thirst for knowledge—not even a pang of desire.

John Comerio

#8. You have not become a genius merely because you have access to the best set of files.

Harry Carl

#8. You have not completed a lesson simply because you have read the assignment.

Jane Trampe

#8. You have not won a battle because you have fired the most shots.

Donald Steiner

#8. You have not won a woman because you have married her.

Donald Johnson

Rhet as Writ

If I can finish school, I want to go into coaching; especially small ones.

* * * * *

While still in grade school my parents moved to the vicinity of Midway Airport.

* * * * *

Joint meetings of the heads of nation's . . . have been called summit meeting's because they were held in the Swiss mountains.

* * * * *

God is only a figmate of man's imagination.

* * * * *

Just try to make love by the way described in this essay. I doubt weather anyone can make true love in four minutes.

* * * * *

In mid evil times, also called the dark ages, everyone dressed, acted, thought, and believed in the same way.

* * * * *

The bull stared at me across the brook . . . Suddenly he began pawning the earth.

* * * * *

I greeted my friends and was abhorrent when I saw the wild, lunatic smirks on their faces.

* * * * *

At 10:15 there was no word from the park and no phone calls from the neighborhood. This may be known in literary circles as the clam before the storm.

* * * * *

My father turned me around and gave me a swift kick in the pants. It did not hurt physically, but my pride sure did take it on the chin.

* * * * *

Love is necessary in each of our daily lives. The boy in love might get up out of bed and spend quite a little time in the bathroom making sure that he will be neat. The boy not in love might spend only half as much time in preparing for the day. He might take only one or two wipes across the face with the washcloth while the other boy would take great care in knowing that he had loosened *all* the dirt which might be present.

* * * * *

And, according to most of the big poles, these television appearances have helped the political position of one of the two candidates.

The Contributors

Dennis Alan Weeks—DeKalb

William Bussey—Naperville

Philip G. Plotica—Meriden, Connecticut

Mary Louise Borgman—Jefferson High, San Antonio, Texas

Linda Creamer—Urbana

Donald L. Fox—Bicknell, Indiana

Robert Rutter—Evanston

Ron Lindgren—Rock Island

Thomas Osborn—University High, Urbana

Elizabeth Constance Krohne—York

The Winners

The following were selected by the members of the rhetoric staff as the best themes in the last issue of the *Caldron*:

First: Donald Lee Fox, "Steinbeck and Brotherhood"

Second: Mary Louise Borgman, "Why We Need More Westerns on Television"

Third: Anne Shipley, "One World?"

Fourth: Thomas A. McGreevey, "When It's Ajar"

Fifth: John Marxen, "A Materialist Afterlife"

